

Message Text

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NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 A-01 AID-05

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1082

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BEIRUT 6178

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MILI, PINS, PINT, LE

SUBJECT: LEBANESE SITUATION JULY 13: ALL EYES ON CAIRO AS PALESTINIAN
SITUATION CONTINUES TO DETERIORATE AND SYRIAN PRESSURE GROWS

REF: BEIRUT 6133

1. SUMMARY: BEIRUT POLITICAL AND PRESS QUARTERS ARE
WATCHING ARAB LEAGUE DEVELOPMENTS IN CAIRO, LARGELY WITH
APPREHENSION, AS VARIOUS SIDES STATE AND RESTATE THEIR
CONDITIONS. PALESTINIANS HOPE SOMETHING WILL GET THEM
OUT FROM UNDER HEEL OF OVERWHELMING SYRIAN POWER, SAY
THEY WILL TURN TO SOVIETS IF AL GAILS. CHRISTIANS,,
CONFIDENT OF POSITION, RESTATING DEMANDS AND KEEPING
DISTANCE FROM NATIVE LEBANESE EFFORTS AT RECONCILIATION.
CHRISTIAN/SYRIAN MILITARY PRESSURE BUILDING AROUND
TRIPOLI. SYRIAN FORCES MOVING IN ON PALESTINIANS AT
BAALBEK. STILL SOME PALESTINIAN RESISTANCE AT TELL
ZAATAR. FIGHTING AT LOWER LEVEL ALONG BEIRUT
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CONFRONTATION LINE. SIDON SITUATION UNCHANGED. SOME

SIGNS THAT NEW SYRIAN FORCES ENTERING LEBANON. END
SUMMARY.

2. CAIRO MEETING OF ARAB LEAGUE FOREIGN MINISTERS
VIEWED WITH SKEPTICISM FROM LEBANON AS MINISTERS
DISCUSS COMPOSITION OF AL STRIKE FORCE. PRESS
SKEPTICAL THAT AL WILL BE ABLE AGREE ON ANY COMBINATION
ARAB FORCES. PALESTINIANS NOW ACCEPT "STRIKE FORCE"
IDEA BUT SAY FIRST AL ACT MUST BE TO SAVE TELL ZAATAR
AND RAISE SIEGE OF OTHER PALESTINIAN CAMPS. KATAEB
JULY 12 MADE STATEMENT TO AL REPRESENTATIVE YUAKIM
MOUBARAK THAT, THOUGH KATAEB WELCOMES ARAB FORCES AT
HOT SPOTS, "TELL ZAATAR IS NO LONGER A HOT SPOT AND
THE MATTER OF THE CAMP IS CLOSED." LEBANON ONCE AGAIN
ABSENT FROM AL MEETING. PRESS INTERPRETS ABSENCE OF
RIGHTIST EFFORT REPRESENT LEBANESE GOVERNMENT AS EFFORT
TO "GIVE THE SYRIAN ALLY LIBERTY OF ACTION." SYRIA
SEEN AS LIKELY TO TAKE COOPERATIVE ATTITUDE WITH
LEBANON, BUT TO CONTINUE FOLLOW OWN COUNSEL, EVIDENCED
ALREADY IN ACCEPTANCE IDEA OF ARAB LEAGUE STRIKE
FORCE. MODERATE SUNNI LEADER IN WEST BEIRUT BELIEVES
PRIVATELY THAT VIABLE AL FORCE MIGHT BE POSSIBLE IF
EGYPT WERE TO PLAY MAJOR ROLE, ACTING AS GUARANTOR OF
PLO INTERESTS, COMPLEMENTING SYRIAN PROTECTIVE ROLE
VIS-A-VIS CHRISTIANS. WE UNDERSTAND SAUDIS MAY
SUPPORT SUCH A CONFIGURATION.

3. FATAH REPRESENTATIVE REBHI AWAD TOLD ARAB MINISTERS
SYRIA HAS TRANSMITTED "ULTIMATUM" VIA LIBYAN PREMIER
JALLOUT WHICH DEMANDS RECOGNITION OF SYRIAN MEDIATION,
ADMISSION THAT CONFLICT IS BETWEEN LEBANESE AND
PALESTINIANS, AND ACCEPTANCE OF SYRIAN ROLE AS
GUARANTOR OF CAIRO ACCORDS REGULATING PALESTINIAN/
LEBANESE RELATIONS. IF NOT, AWAD SAYS, SYRIA THREATENS
APPLY THESE MEASURES BY FORCE IN ATTACK ON SIDON AND
BEIRUT. AWAD READ YET ANOTHER APPEAL TO ARAB STATES
FROM YASIR ARAFAT ASKING FOR URGENT INTERVENTION IN
LEBANON, FAILING WHICH ARAFAT WOULD CALL ON "NON-
ARAB FRIENDS." PALESTINIANS WILL RESENT AL TRIPARTITE
COMMITTEE REPORT WHICH QUOTES FRANGIE SAYING
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PALESTINIAN PRESENCE IN LEBANON SHOULD BE LIMITED TO
PALESTINIANS REGISTERED WITH UNRWA AND REST SHOULD BE
DISTRIBUTED AMONG OTHER ARAB STATES. OF SOME
350,000 ACTUALLY LIVING HERE, ONLY SOME 190,000 ARE
REGISTERED WITH UNRWA.

4. SAUDI ARABIS SEEN HERE MOVING CLOSER TO SYRIAN/
CHRISTIAN CAMP WITH PROPOSAL (APPARENTLY REJECTED)

TO AL THAT SYRIA BE GIVEN ONE WEEK TO ESTABLISH
PEACE IN LEBANON BEFORE AL STEPS IN WITH OTHER
MEASURES. SAUDI SEVEN-POINT PEACE PLAN RESEMBLES
EARLIER PLAN OF LIBYAN PREMIER JALLOUD, AND HAS SAME
DEFECT, IN PALESTINIAN/LEFTIST EYES, -- IT APPEARS
TO GIVE DAMASCUS ROLE OF SOLE ARBITER OF LEBANESE
CRISIS AND DOES NOT CALL FOR SYRIAN WITHDRAWAL. SAUDI
ARABIA IS AMONG FEW ARAB STATES CHRISTIANS ACCEPT AS
CONTRIBUTOR TO AL PEACE FORCE. ACCORDING TO THE ARAB
WORLD TOTAL ARAB LEAGUE FORCE IN LEBANON AT PRESENT
IS ABOUT 2300, INCLUDING 700 SYRIANS, 300 LIBYANS,
800 SAUDIS AND 500 SUDANESE.

5. PIERRE GEMAYEL HAS NOT JOINED EDDE'S NEW "NATIONAL
UNION FRONT" BUT SAYS HE WELCOMES FRONT AND INVITES
ALL NATIONAL LEADERS TO UNITE TO SAVE "THE LEBANESE
FORMULA OF COEXISTENCE." EDDEAN IN DISCUSSION OF FRONT
WITH PRESS, SAYS PARTITION OF LEBANON WOULD BE PRELUDE
TO PARTITION OF SYRIA AS WELL. JUNBLATT MET LEFTIST
LEADERS JULY 12 TO EXAMINE POSSIBILITY OF MORE
CLOSELY KNIT LEFTIST POLITICAL FRONT, AND SAID SOVIET
AMBASSADOR SOLDADOV HAS BRIEFED HIM ON "CERTAIN
MEASURES" BEING UNDERTAKEN ON BEHALF OF LEBANON BY
SOVIET UNION.

6. ON THE GROUND, NORTH LEBANON REMAINS VERY ACTIVE
WITH LEFT CLAIMING COMBIN #
TTQOQISTIAN/SYRIAN ATTACK #
ON TRIPOLI FROM SOUTH, EAST AND NORTH. RADIO AMCHIT
(FRANGIE) SAYS RIGHTISTS NOW CONTROL HRACHE AND
HEIGHTS OF BOHSASS AT SOUTH ENTRY TO TRIPOLI AND
HAVE TAKEN RAS EL-NATOUR, DAHR EL-AYN (IMPORTANT
SOURCE OF WATER FOR TRIPOLI,) VARSA AND DAR MHAASA.
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WE UNDERSTAND RIGHTISTS ARE NOT QUITE TO BOHSASS
HEIGHTS, HAVING ENCOUNTERED ON LOWER REACHES FIRST
SIGNIFICANT RESISTANCE SINCE TAKING TOWN OF ENFE.
KATAEB RADIO SAYS RIGHTIST FORCES NOW ATTACKING DEDDEH
SOUTH OF TRIPOLI. Wafa SAYS SYRIAN ATTACK ON NAHR
EL-BARED PALESTINIAN CAMP CONTINUES, BUT BEING REPELLED.

7. TWENTY-FOUR HOUR TRUCE CALLED AT ALEY/KAHALE IN
CENTRAL AREA TO ALLOW BOTH SIDES RETRIEVE DEAD, BUT
AREA REMAINS EMBROILED. ARTILLERY DUELS CONTINUE
ALONG MOUNTAIN LINE OF MRROUJE/MTEYN/BOIS DE BOULOGNE/
AINTOURA/SANNINE/FARAYA/BASKINTA/BCHELAMA. IN THE
BEKAA, MILITARY SITUATION NOT CLEAR BUT LEFT BLAIMS TO
HAVE CHECKED FIFTH SYRIAN ATTEMPT TO ENTER BAALBEK.
RIGHTIST SOURCE CLAIMS PALESTINIANS HAVE ABANDONED

WAVELL CAMP IN BAALBEK AND ARE CONCENTRATING DEFENSES AT SITE OF RRMA RUINS, BUT THAT THEY LACK WATER, FOOD AND AMMUNITION. SYRIANS HAVE CAPTURED FORMER LEBANESE ARMY TRAINING CENTER, SHHEIKH ABDULLAH CASERNE, ON HIGH GROUND SOUTH OF BAALBEK.

NOTE BY OC/T: #AS RECEIVED

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8. VOICE OF LEBANON (KATAEL) SAYS MATTA FACTORY, LAST BASTION OF DEFENDERS OF TELL ZAATAR, HAS FALLEN. RADIO QUOTES PRISONERS THAT THEY WOULD HAVE SURRENDERED WEEK AGO BUT FOR STRICT ORDERS FROM PALESTINIAN HEADQUARTERS AT SABRA AND CHATILA. WE UNDERSTAND THIS IS CORRECT. CHAMOUNIST STATEMENT SAYS ICRC HAS RECEIVED 150 LEBANESE PERSONS FROM TELL ZAATAR AND THAT THEIR EVACUATION WILL BE FACILITIATED. ICRC IN WEST BEIRUT SAYS SO FAR NO PERSONS OR PRISONERS HAVE BEEN ALLOWED TO CROSS TO WEST BEIRUT. PALESTINIAN SOURCES CONTINUE TO DENY FALL OF TELL ZAATARTAR. PFLP/GC ARRANGED RADIO DIALOGUE BETWEEN FOREGIN JOURNALISTS

AND CAMP COMMANDER WHO CLAIMS ORIGINAL CAMP PERIMETER STILL NOT BREACHED BUT ADMITS 150 DEFENDERS KILLED AND 600 WOUNDED. SURROUNDING AREAS VERR ACTIVIE JULY 12 WITH HEAVY EXCHANGES OF GRAD MISSILES AND AUTOMATIC WEAPONS.

9. BEIRUT CENTRAL CITY LESS ACTIVE BUT SNIPERS
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INCREASE. INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS REPORTED JULY 12 ON FATTAL/AJAMI CONFRONTATION AXIS. IN SUBURBS TEMPORARY LULL BROKEN BY SPORADIC FIRING AT CHIAH/AIN EL-RUMMANEH, AT HADETH/LAYLAKE AND SURROUNDING AREAS.

10. SITUATION NOT CLEAR AT SIDON, ALTHOUGH SYRIAN BOMBARDMENTS CONTINUE AGAINST PALESTINIAN CAMPS AND AWWALI RIVER BRIDGE. ZAHRANI TANK FARM STILL BURNING. REMAINING GASOLINE STOCKS ARE BEING WITHDRAWN FROM REFINERY BY PALESTINIANS/LAA IN TANK TRUCKS. FROM DAMASCUS LIBYAN PREMIER JALLOUD TELLS PALESTINIANS HE HAS SYRIAN COMMITMENT TO WITHDRAW FROM SIDON WITHIN FEW DAYS, BUT LEETISTS REPORT SYRIANS ACTUALLY FORTIFYING POSITIONS AROUND CITY.

11. SYRIAN FORCES IN LEBANON MAY BE GROWING. NEW UNITS OF UNKNOWN STRENGTH REPORTED ON LEBANESE BORDER AT MASNAA. WE ALSO HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF NEW SYRIAN FORCES IN COUNTRY NORTH OF TRIPOLI.
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